



December 17, 2012

Dear Parents/Guardians:

We were all saddened by the events that unfolded at Sandy Hook Elementary School last Friday. As parents, we join with the community and share in their grief as they continue to deal with this unspeakable tragedy. We will hold them in our thoughts in the days ahead as they come to terms with the violence that has gripped their community and taken the lives of their loved ones.

Over the weekend, our thoughts naturally turned to our own children at the Toronto District School Board. Please know that every day our goal is to have children learn in a caring and safe school environment. We have put in place guidelines, resources and plans that make every attempt to ensure the safety of our children and staff.

The news reports over the weekend have raised questions about how we can help our children as they react to this news. As educators and parents we can work together to help our children and support them to deal with their many questions. Children, depending on their age, will have different understandings and awareness of these events.

We would like to offer a few suggestions about how to address this tragedy with your children:

**Be reassuring** –the most important person in a child's life is their parent/guardian and children learn a lot about how to deal with these kinds of events from interacting with their parents. It is important to answer their questions in a calm way and to offer reassurance about what you and others are doing to keep them safe.

**Listen** – most parents will already have had discussions with their child. Listen to their responses, questions, feelings and let them guide you as to what their needs are. Respond to their concerns with age-appropriate explanations.

**Be aware of access to media reports** –some professionals are recommending that children should not have access to media reports about the incident. They can be graphic and raise the anxiety of students. However, you know your child and their age, it is important to monitor what they are watching and reading and to be available to answer any questions that they might have.

**Maintain a sense of normalcy** –it is important to maintain the same routines and schedules that you have at home. This provides comfort and helps to reinforce security for children.

**Speak to your school** -if you have any concerns about your child's reaction or have questions, please contact your child's teacher or someone else at the school.

More information and resources are available on our website, at [www.tdsb.on.ca](http://www.tdsb.on.ca).

In the days ahead, we will continue to work together to ensure the safety of our children.

For our children,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Spence'.

Chris Spence  
Director of Education